



## Health Department to Debut New WIC Card in Rutland



**For Immediate Release:** April 21, 2015

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RUTLAND - Vermont was first in the nation to deliver supplemental food to young families through the Health Department's WIC (Women, Infants & Children) program, and for years was last in the nation to keep making home deliveries.

Beginning in July in Rutland, WIC families will choose their foods at major supermarkets and smaller grocery stores using a new, gold WIC debit card. Between October 2015 and March 2016 the WIC card will roll out to families statewide.

"Being able to shop throughout the month, when families need food, provides more flexibility for families," said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD. "The card is about convenience, choice and control."



WIC, the federal special supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants and Children celebrated its 40th anniversary last year. WIC has helped pregnant women, new mothers, and young children eat well, learn about nutrition and stay healthy.

WIC offers nutrition information, breastfeeding support, and nutritious foods to approximately 58 percent of all newborn babies born in the state. A third of all 1- to- 4-year-old children are WIC recipients.

Families will be able to select from a broader variety of foods, such as yogurt, whole wheat pasta, fruits and vegetables, peanut butter and tortillas.

The change is bittersweet for Donna Bister, WIC program director, who has been with the Health Department and involved with the program since 1976.

"The home deliveries will always be part of the history of the Health Department, and it's a point of pride for us and everyone involved," Bister said. "WIC became successful nationally due in part to the pilot project created here in Vermont, and the program enhanced our reputation as a 'can do' state."

The Health Department's Rutland WIC team will host a carnival and answer questions about the new card at the Rutland High School Gymnasium from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on May 2.

Thomas Dairy will also be honored for having delivered foods to WIC family doorsteps for the past 40 years, despite barking dogs, difficult to locate rural homes, muddy roads, ice storms and every other obstacle WIC distributors overcame and plowed through to provide food to families.

To learn more about WIC, the new WIC card, or the upcoming WIC carnival, call the Rutland office at 802-786-5811 or toll-free 800-253-8802.

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